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LETTERS TO DAVID WATSON

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For permission to copy and print these letters (formerly a part of the Watson papers) we are indebted to Mr. Thomas J. Michie, of Charlottesville, and Mr. Herbert A. Claiborne, of Richmond.

With the exception of the letters from F. W. Gilmer and one from J. C. Cabell, those printed below were written from William and Mary. The letter of Mr. Cabell, referred to, was written in the interval between the completion of his academic course and his return to Williamsburg to enter the law course. The last letter from Mr. Gilmer was written while he was abroad seeking professors for the University of Virginia.

FROM ROBERT MICHIE<sup>1</sup>

Wm & Mary, Nov. 3rd, 1797.

Dear David:—

When you receive this you will unavoidably confess that I am a man of my word according to the proverb for whensoever I have promised you I have omitted to write.

Your letter to Howard is in my trunk he has not yet come. He was seen by the Bishop in his circuit—requested him particularly to direct Moir to reserve a room from which we may calculate on his coming back—I have taken your room as its called in college and have the happiness to tell you that there is an alteration considerable in the Brafferton† diet but far

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<sup>1</sup> For note on Robert Michie, see April Magazine, p. 134.

† The Brafferton is a brick house on the campus of William and Mary. It was built in 1723 for the use of the Indian school founded under the bequest of Hon. Robert Boyle, 1692. The funds bequeathed were invested in the purchase of the manor of Brafferton in York-

are they yet, from the Heliogabelan proficiency. I have seen Miss D——is & could not help thinking of your insinuation to my Brother, one thing surprized me that you seemed to credit it & another that he did not—You may think as you please. Hence I should have been at pains to undeceive Morris has deceived you & my embarrassment at your house, I suppose was a confirmation.

We have delegated four to alter and make every necessary amendment in the regulations for our society they will be brought in to-night—numberless debaters are we like to have this term.

Tom Maury<sup>2</sup> took stage at Edgs. [Fredericksburg] for Alexandria to be inoculated but the Corporation having made a law that no one should be permitted except he could produce a certificate of three years residence; has sent him to us again.

I am fond of Tom; but what in the world detains Morris<sup>3</sup>. I really begin to suspect the fellow is going to desert us! There's great variety in the dress of the students this Course from the finest satin, to a pair of check overalls.

Your friends lament the check in your literary progress but hope its duration will be short.

Beal goes on as usual very seldom at the Bishop's but his walk is not so distant as formerly on down to Moirs old dwelling.

I am yours,                      Ro. Michie.

This is an odd letter however you shall receive it, Tom has returned from Alexia and we are like to elect the Bishop president of our Society.

R. Michie.

[Addressed] David Watson, Esqr, Louisa, G. Springs

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shire. The house at the College was named for the English manor which remained the property of William and Mary down to the American Revolution. The Brafferton has long been used as a boarding or rooming house for students.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas W. Maury, Louisa County, B. A., William & Mary 1798. He was son of Rev. Matthew Maury (born 1744) and Elizabeth Walker his wife. He represented Albemarle County in the House of Delegates 1815-16, 1817-18, had a school for a number of years at Charlottesville and died in 1842.

<sup>3</sup> James W. Morris, A. B., 1798.

FROM ROBERT MICHIE.

Wm. &amp; Mary, Dec. 21, 1797.

Dear David:—

I have written several times to you but have received no answer, having too much to do in the Rotine [?] I resolved to do nothing so I will amuse myself with writing.

Lee<sup>4</sup> going to Richmond, promises to give this to Mr. Ferrill if he does Sam's particularity will insure the reception, theres a risque but nought cannot be endangered. I received a letter from Philadelphia announcing the safe arrival of Vaughan & White. On their return they I suppose will restore Methusalian age at least. But some ascribe the longevity of the ancients to the want of the Faculty. I have done what you requested respecting information opportunity of conveyance whether they have written I can't say.

Tomlin was not here when I wrote last sickness and not old age had prevented his coming he seems willing to write.

Respecting news or occurrences that which engrosses the attention of every one at present is the setting of Hornsbie's House to rights in an Egnog fit. Common Hall has set Blue Room and Lemon with a note has been engaged ever since the inability of Tucker to attend has caused them to go to his house to say they wish to proceed legally now, the question being put in the Blue. Whether were you present or not? Illegality was plead and no answer given. They will determine to day and if any thing worth impartation I will inform you circumstantially.

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<sup>4</sup>The printed catalogue of the College has very many omissions and errors. These letters will add a number of names to the list. Vaughan, White, Wiley, Parker and Howard do not appear at this time. Lee was probably Arthur Lee, of Norfolk, a student in 1798. Whitfield was Thomas Whitfield, A. B., styled (probably erroneously) as "of the Eastern Shore." Beale was Norborne Beale, of Williamsburg, student, 1798. Smith was probably Thomas G. Smith, of King and Queen County. Pryor probably John C. Pryor, of Gloucester, student 1798. Tomlin probably J. M. Tomlin, of Hanover, student 1798. Deans was Josiah Deans, of Gloucester, A. B., 1798. William Beverley, of Essex, was a student 1798. There were several Taylors in College at this time.

I have told you every thing I believe that Wiley was going to live with Ambler. Whitfield was here studying law and Beale, Lee, Smith, Prior, Parker, Deanes, of your acquaintances Tomlin talks of not attending there are none but these, or some of them you would not suspect. Taylor is and has been in Richmond sometime on his return. Howard we hear is not coming great grief to Mrs. Moir. Benet is in high demand here his wit keeps us continually laughing. He was told by Brokenborough tother night, that he was very witty to night, perfectly calm he replied, not more so than common. Morris is negative. Speech for fun has eclipsed Maury. If you take the Argus Julius on the Adulation paid the president was written by Brokenborough† Yancey is a bad fellow to depend on for remission not of sins but money. I have written to him but he has not answered. He like Bloomer's Debtor wants his memory juggled. We are to have a kind of shew tonight, the fellow promises largely viz. Chinese shades the flying of snakes and other philosophical experiments too hideous to mention. This is enough to tell you at once.

Remember me to your father and mother and the family.

I remain,

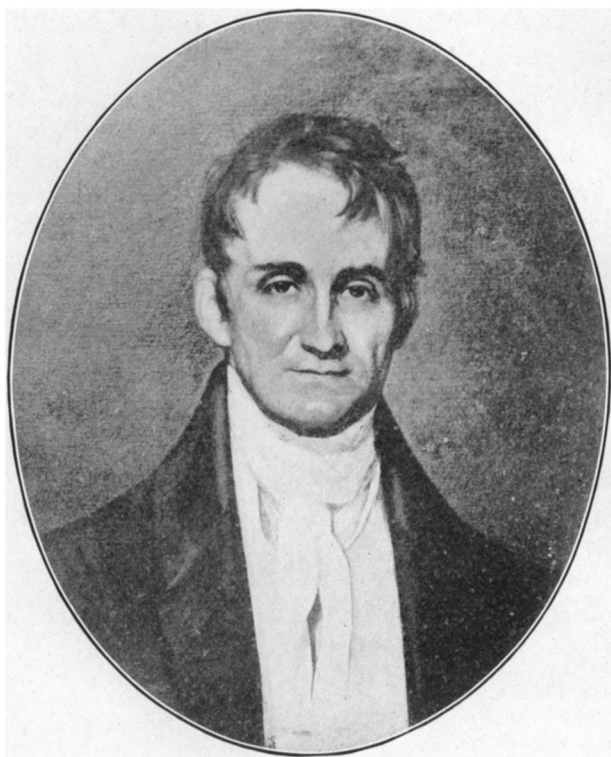
Rob. Michie.

[Addressed] David Watson, Esqr, Louisa County.  
To the care of Mrs. Terrell, Richmond.

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† William Brockenbrough, son of Dr. John Brockenbrough, of Tappahannock, was born July 10, 1778, and died Dec. 10, 1838. He was long distinguished in public life, represented Essex County in the House of Delegates 1801-2, 1802-3, and Hanover 1807-8, 1808-9; was appointed member of Council May, 1803, Judge of the General Court Feb. 7, 1809, and later Judge of the Court of Appeals. He married Judith, daughter of John and Judith (daughter of Carter Braxton) White; and had issue: 1. Judge John W., of Lexington, Va. 2. Judith White, married Rev. John P. McGuire. 3. Elizabeth, married Jefferson Phelps. 4. Mary Stevenson, married Willoughby Newton, M. C., of "Linden", Westmoreland County. 5. Jane, married Edward Colston, of "Honeywood", Berkeley Co. 6. Dr. William Spencer Roane, of Hanover County, who married Catherine, daughter of Thomas Nelson and widow of Charles L. U. Page.

Judge Brockenbrough was a brother of Dr. John Brockenbrough, of Richmond, and, himself, lived long in this city. A genealogy of the Brockenbrough family was published in this Magazine V, 447-449; VI, 81-85.



JOSEPH CARRINGTON CABELL

FROM JOSEPH C. CABELL<sup>5</sup>

Warminster, June 7th, 1799.

Dear Watson:—

You wrote me a letter about the middle of last January. That letter I received along with one from our worthy friend Yancey, in March. It is now June; and I have answered neither. What then ought to be my conduct under circumstances like these? No doubt you have already passed sen-

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<sup>5</sup> Joseph Carrington Cabell was born Dec. 26, 1778, and died February 5, 1856. He was at Hampden-Sidney College 1795-1796 and afterwards at William and Mary where he took the degree of A. B. He traveled in Europe 1802-1806. He was a member of the House of Delegates from Nelson County 1808-1809, 1809-1810, 1831-1835, and of the State Senate 1810-1829. He was Jefferson's chief supporter in the Legislature in founding the University of Virginia and it is hardly overstating to say that probably that great institution could not then have been established without his aid. He was a Visitor of the University 1819-56, and Rector, 1845-56. He was also deeply interested in internal improvements and has been called "the father of the James River and Kanawha Canal." He was one of the original incorporators of that company in 1835 and its president 1835-46. His correspondence with Jefferson has been published in book form. In 1848 he became a life member of the Virginia Historical Society.

Mr. Cabell was a man of high character, of great ability and national reputation. There is an admirable sketch of his life in Vol. 1, pp. 145-157, of the *History of the University of Virginia*, by Philip A. Bruce.

The only blot on Joseph C. Cabell's record, which he shares with Jefferson, is what even the distinguished historian of the University, Dr. Bruce, calls their "ungenerous and inconsistent spirit of hostility to William and Mary." He farther adds that this is "the only chapter in the history of the University, which is darkened by the spirit of an illiberal and ungenerous policy—a policy, indeed, only relieved from the taint of positive unscrupulousness by the fact that it was dictated, not by personal selfishness, but by the supposed welfare of a great institution." For much that Jefferson and Cabell were, they owed to William and Mary, yet they fought bitterly every plan for her improvement and tried to rob her (at her time of special weakness and need) of her endowment. Happily most college men (and none more than the sons of the University of Virginia) have a truer loyalty to *Alma Mater*. It is difficult, even now, for some persons to speak with proper restraint about this matter; but though one may with his whole soul reject the doctrine (apparently held in this case by Jefferson and Cabell) that the end justifies the means, yet he may feel that their ungrateful and disloyal work has turned out to be the best for both institutions. A William and Mary at Richmond might have weakened the new University, and it is in every way well that the old College has not lost its historic connection with the small city of Williamsburg.

tence on me as a trembling culprit at the bar of friendship. I can now only avail myself of that liberality, which I have had frequent occasion to exercise towards yourself. I can only beg you not to measure my esteem and respect for your virtues and talents by the number of scrolls I send you. No, my friend, this would be a fallible criterion. As you never have detected me in flattery you cannot suppose that I now fly to the vulgar method of apologising by dipping my pen in the cup of adulation. I could readily assign you and the rest of my friends who honor me with their letters the last of excuses for a silence that may apparently (but does not really) argue disrespect and an inconsistency between my professions and practices, but relying on their candor, I shall waive lengthy apologies which *to you* I believe are always disagreeable.

This, Watson, is I believe the first letter you have had from me since I took my leave of the old beloved Seat of Science. As you have already felt it is useless for me to describe the emotions that attended my exit from the walls of College. You know what it is to have moved with pleasure amidst "the haunts of youth"; to have formed the firmest of friendships, and to have exchanged the society of congenial souls for the peaceful but chilling prospects of a sequestered country seat. The stoutest among us yield to the impressions of sensibility on these occasions. And its with candor I confess to you my feelings were never more painful than they were at the idea of beholding our College friends separately on the road of life—perhaps not to meet before their journies' end. But let us leavy this gloomy idea. Perhaps you have seen or heard from my letters to Yancey, the nature of my pursuits since my return to the Mountains. About the first of last December I set myself down at my Brothers residence from which I now write you. Here I am endeavouring to extend my information, and as you observe, to make myself a piece of a lawyer. I have heard the law abused so frequently as a dry study that I heretofore been disposed to think this only a fashionable cant among young men. But I can inform you that it deserves all the censure that the lazy, the idle, or the industrious have bestowed on it. The labours of Sysiphus or the punishment



of the Danaides were not much worse than the incessant and never ending task of pouring over the mouldy records of Law. Do you remember what Thom. Paine said about Burke's Treatise on the French Revolution. The observation may be well applied to this celebrated study of ours. It is something like "point no point" indeed. Pardon the liberty I thus take in censuring your profession. Possibly my next letter to you may bring its eulogium.

\*Well my friend what think you of the noise and bustle that the politicians have kicked up in our land? As you observed in your letter that you should feel like a "Tick in a tar barrel" were you to enter on the subject of Politicks, I presume you are not fond of the topic. You will excuse my bringing you into the region of tar as it is nowadays a mark of ill breeding to converse of write on any other subject. Besides I feel happy in fraternising with my brother republicans at a time when they appear to be the objects on which the other half of the community vent all their angry passions. 'Watson, what has caused the elections for Congress to go as they have done? Do you agree with me in opinion that the proceedings of the last assembly have caused the change? I have no doubt that the objects of the Members in adopting their Resolutions and addresses were perfectly pure. But whether the Measures they adopted to effect those objects were the most *prudent* and *politick* I doubt very much. The state of the public mind during last summer and fall resembled what it was on the adoption of the British Treaty. The people glowed with indignation at the enactment of laws directly violating their Constitution and notwithstanding the efforts of a party to cool their resentment by artfully diverting their attention to the conduct of a foreign nation, they were resolved to repel the injuries

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\* In the Sixth Congress, which began Dec. 2, 1799, the senators from Virginia were Stevens Thomson Mason and Wilson Cary Nicholas, and the representatives, Samuel J. Cabell, Mathew Clay, John Dawson, Joseph Eggleston, Thomas Evans, Samuel Goode, Edwin Gray, David Holmes, George Jackson, Henry Lee, John Marshall, Anthony New, John Nicholas, Robert Page, Josiah Parker, Levin Powell, John Randolph, Littleton Waller Tazewell, Abram Trigg and John Trigg. Mr. Cabell evidently thought that any movement tending towards a separation from the Union would cause anxiety and alarm among the Virginia people.

their liberties had suffered. But the handle that was made of the Measures of the last assembly has had its desired effect in alarming the people. The *federalists* have excited a belief that the legislature intended, and that their measures, led to, disunion. The people fearing disunion as the worst of evils have therefore thought it better even at the risk of bad laws, to elect men who would never consent to a dissolution of the federal compact. When evil effects have flowed from certain causes, we are apt to wonder that those effects were not foreseen by the author of their causes. Perhaps we should in similar circumstances find our sagacity, foresight and penetration fall equally as far short of perfection.

I imagine you are by this time convinced by practical observation of the effects of a standing army. The *brave and honourable* way in which the officers of that army have treated the Editors of two Republican papers exhibits a spectacle of heroism that challenges its equal in the days of Chivalry. When we consider Montesquieu's reflection on the delays of Courts of Justice in free countries, we can but admire and applaud the invention of those heroes in pointing out the way to obtain liberty without its usual price to effect a speedy arrival at Justice without one of the delays which usually accompany its administration. This invention comes with peculiar propriety from those who were called together to execute the Laws.

I imagine you hear how affairs are moving on at W. & M. There is but one event which I think worth mentioning from the old City. Eve is going to be married again—to our old fellow student—Bankhead. There is nothing new in Amherst. I have written you this letter merely as an apology for having suffered your letter to remain unanswered so long. Situated as I am amidst lonely hills and having been separated from you so long, you must perceive how hard I'm pushed \* \* \* [torn] in this long epistle for *something*, to write about. I [hope the?] same circumstance can have no weight with you. I know it has not. Let me therefore request you, Watson, to write to me shortly. Grant me the pleasure of hearing fully from you in this solitary part of Virginia. Let me beg you to

continue the friendly practice of recommending to my perusal those passages of authors what you think will improve my mind. The advantages you have already afforded me in this way I remember with gratitude.

Coles<sup>7</sup> my fellow-student and constant companion, desires to be remembered to you.

I am, Dr. Watson, your friend sincerely,

Jos. C. Cabell.

11th.

Tell Yancey I have been expecting him here ever since the District Ct.; that this alone has prevented my answering his letters since that time, and that as he seems determined to rob me of the pleasure of seeing him here, I shall write to him (and to Minor) by the next mail. I need not observe how happy I should be to see you, could you pay us a visit. *I was once your fellow student at Wm. & M.*

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FROM CHAPMAN JOHNSON<sup>8</sup>

Wmsburg 19th Decr. 99

My Dear Friend,

You certainly have forgotten your promise, and my letter has not arrived to remind you of it. You will receive this I expect in Richmond and, the next stage expect the pleasure of hearing from you.

My situation in College is as commodious and agreeable as I could reasonably have expected. I occupy a very convenient room, on the third floor, your former habitation, I believe. The students generally are less assiduous, than I could wish, but, however, I have not, much reason to complain of interruption. I am much pleased with the Bishop. His politeness of behavior, his openness of disposition, his easiness of manners, his affability and familiarity in conversation, which added to his

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<sup>7</sup> Isaac A. Coles, of Albemarle, A. B. 1798. He was a lawyer, was for a time Jefferson's private secretary, and was a member of the House of Delegates 1840-41. His home was "Enniscorthy," Albemarle County.

<sup>8</sup> For note on Chapman Johnson and portrait see April Magazine, 155 et seq.

extensive information, great virtues and moral rectitude of conduct, irresistibly engage the esteem and admiration of all who are acquainted with him. I am not insensible to the charms of every thing, that is noble and excellent in human nature.

I was really somewhat surprised, to find the Bishop so firm a Christian, as I now believe him; after having so frequently heard, that he was a deist in sentiment. If he is not a Christian, he certainly is the most consummate hypocrite; and this I cannot believe of him; his firm belief is manifested in every action of his life. My acquaintance with the inhabitants has progressed very slowly, tho' it has kept pace with my desires, for I find that an extensive acquaintance, would be incompatible with close study. The few with whom I have become acquainted, I find polite and agreeable. The people generally of this place appear extremely gay and extravagant. There have been not less than four balls, since I came to town, & there will be another this week. To one, who has spent his life in Louisa, where a ball is almost a phenomenon, this must appear the height of extravagance. I have hitherto attended the Bishop's Moral Course in the Junior class and his natural course. But purposing to attend Tucker's next course and finding that I cou'd not get through the Bishop's political course, before Tucker's lectures commenced, if I continued with the Junior class I have it best to join the seniors and the Bishop concurs with me in opinion. I shall consequently begin Rousseau immediately. But from all the other studies put together, I do not promise myself half the pleasure I receive from N. Philosophy. The Lectures on Magnetism & Central Forces were particularly pleasing to me for altho the theories of Magnetism are extremely chimerical, and indeed some of them absurd and ridiculous in my estimation, yet the phenomena are so curious beautiful and interesting that they are truly entertaining. But the doctrine of Central Forces, is not so obscured with any of these fanciful theories, here the laws are beautifully explained, and the phenomena satisfactorily accounted for. The Whirling Table is certainly one of the most beautiful machines that was ever invented, for the

illustration of Philosophical phenomena. Upon the whole I think these lectures far preferable to any yet delivered.

Present my compliments to your father's family.

C. Johnson.

Be kind enough to take a letter out of the P. office for my bro. R. and forward it to him as soon as possible.

C. J.

[Addressed] David Watson Esq.

Atto. at Law

Louisa

Mail Rich'd P. office.

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FROM CHAPMAN JOHNSON.

Wmsburg, 18th May, 1800.

My dear Watson:—

“Ehue! fugaces, Posthume, Posthume,  
Laburtur annos ———”

If time, so precious to man, glides thus, inevitably on, life shortens, each moment, what must be the reflections of one who has sacrificed to Idleness, so great a part his life? But when, will he find consolation, when, so soon as he supposes, he has effected a reformation, and is employing himself in a manner, which may redound to his advantage; he is induced to believe or to fear, at least, that his time is yet misspent?

Your “time has been spent (or perhaps misspent) in trying to become a lawyer”. You are dissatisfied with your “progress” You are not pleased with being “very fat.” All this, I suppose however, may be attributed to that universal cause, which operates to make every one discontented, with his own lot; and we may ask, with Horace, “Qui fit Maecenas ut Nemo,” &c.

The unfortunate disturbance, which took place last winter, between the students and professors of this College, if not fairly and circumstantially represented, might induce people less acquainted, then yourself with the professors, to draw

unfavorable and unjust conclusions. That you may do justice to both parties, I will give you a relation of facts. You "augured ill of their effects"; I apprehended serious consequences at the begining, but the storm spent its rage against the rocks.

But to the narrative—A student by the name of Smith, who by the by, is a very small man, had been repeatedly insulted, by the old postmaster, Davis. Smith conceiving, that he had no other method of revenge, determined (after he had taken a few glasses of wine) to repay Davis in his own coin. He accordingly, went to the Post Office, at night, whilst Davis was delivering the papers and indulged himself, in the most unrestrained and immoderate abuse of D. During the abuse and unknown to Smith, Bracken<sup>9</sup> was in the P. Office, and consequently, witness of S.'s conduct. Davis complained, in the morning to the President; and Smith was summoned before the Society. Bracken gave in testimony, that S. made use of the most profane and obscene language, he ever heard. S. plead guilty, but justifiable on the ground of a previous insult, and desired the professors to proceed. When they discovered that he was resolved to justify his conduct, they did proceed to vote an expulsion. Mr. Tucker was not otherwise active, I believe, than in examining the witnesses, and declaring his opinion. The students were then very much agitated, and did not hesitate to censure the conduct of the professors, and particularly of Mr. Tucker, some of them declared, that if the sentence were not revoked they would publish the injustice of the expulsion, and indeed, others went so far as to declare, that they would break the judge's windows, if the expulsion were continued. A meeting of the students, was however, held, to decide on some mode of proceeding in order to obtain a repeal of the decree. To this end a committee of five was appointed to address the professors. An address was drawn up containing a statement of the evils which would result to the object of their disapprobation, a declaration of the injustice of the

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<sup>9</sup> Rev. John Bracken was rector of Bruton parish 1773-1818, at various times professor in the College and master of the grammar school and was in 1812-14, President of the College.

sentence, and praying a repeal thereof. This was sent first to the Bishop, together with depositions, to prove his previous insult, and accompanied by a letter from Smith acknowledging, that altho he had just cause of resentment against Davis, he had chosen an improper time of expressing this resentment. After reading these papers, the Bishop sent for me, and declared that he was desirous, if possible, to revoke the sentence; but that he thought the address of the students calculated rather to confirm, than to produce a rescindment of, the decree. He expressed a good deal of concern for Smith, and said that he was of opinion, that if a proper address was sent in by the students, stating the general good conduct of S. (which they might have done) and, S. would acknowledge the impropriety of his conduct and promise future good behaviour, the sentence might yet be repealed. Another meeting was called, and another address proposed, and rejected. The former was then sent to the other professors. Mr. Tucker had the same opinion of it with the Bishop. They both declared, that they would vote for its being thrown under the table if it came before the Society. The professors had a second and a third meeting on the occasion, and at length determined to let the business drop and S. remain a student.

You have here a statement of the facts. I will only in justice to myself say, that during the transaction, I uniformly approved every measure, which would implicate the propriety of the professor's conduct. You will now be enabled to judge of the conduct both of professors and students.

Your observations on the motives which should influence the conduct of a student of Wm. & Mary meet my most cordial approbation. I have before given you my opinion of the Bishop. A longer acquaintance has not altered it; but every act of his life tends more to confirm it. At the time that [I] spoke of the Bishop, my acquaintance with Tucker, was not sufficient to authorize an opinion of his merit. Since then I have become as intimately acquainted with him as the shortness of time would permit—I am happy to find your opinion of him, so perfectly correspondent with my own. Whatever may be said of his hauteur or austerity I believe him to be "Justum

et tenacum propositi virum." Whatever vulgar respect, too much liberty might command, or whatever praises easy and popular manners may deserve, yet

"An honest man's the noblest work of God"

Whatever enemies his rigid justice may occasion him, yet

"Oneself approving hour whole years outweighs  
Of stupid staves[?] and of laud huzzas".

I have often reflected, and with regret on the exorbitant expenses of education in this Country, and particularly, on the extravagance of the students of William and Mary. To remedy evils resulting therefrom to my Country, wou'd be a work in which I should engage, with peculiar satisfaction. But independently of the interest I feel in the welfare of our common country, my own circumstances make it a matter of primary concern with me to reduce, as much as possible, the expenses of education. Such a society, as you mention, might probably be effected, had we at College more students whose object was rather improvement, than pleasure, and whose fortunes made frugality more necessary. But the genius and dissipation of our students forbid us to entertain a hope that such a society, at this time, be instituted.

"If in a picture (Watson) you should see  
A handsome woman, with a fishes tail,  
Or a man's head upon a horses neck,  
Or limbs of beasts of the most different kinds  
Covered with feathers of all kinds of birds  
Would you not laugh—"

The lectures commence tomorrow, on the conclusion of the May Vacation. We have had only one lecture on Hydrostatics. In that was mentioned, and endeavored to be explained the Hydrostatic paradox. It is truly paradoxical. I think however it may be explained; but not on the principles I have seen advanced in support of it (viz) "action and reaction." It would extend this already long letter, to too great a length, were I to attempt explaining my thoughts on the



subject, and I am sure I could not do it satisfactorily to you and [part of page missing] . . . . satisfied with my investigations . . . . [torn] ciple on which it is built . . . . moving bodies. You will . . . . at, tho', I suppose I am pleased with hearing it announced from almost every quarter that Jefferson is to be our next president. I only wish that it may not be a mistake. What has produced the change? I suppose the number of innocent victims of the oppressive sedition law, the repeated and frequent violations of the Constitution, the want of that cabalistic term "French Invasion" and perhaps the operation of Congressional taxes, have, at length, taught the people to reflect and endeavor to avoid the dangerous abyss, on the brink of which they have so long tottered.

I should like to have your opinion of the constitutionality if the late election bill passes in Congress. From the slight reading I have given it, there appears to me palpable infractions of the Constitution contained in it.

Do you think my hand has improved? The last letter I wrote to you, was executed in such haste that I could with difficulty, read it myself.

Respects to your father's family.

[Bottom of page torn; but the letter is in the writing of Chapman Johnson].

[Address] Cit. David Watson  
Attorney at Law  
Louisa

Via Charlottesville.

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FROM CHAPMAN JOHNSON

Wmsburg 14th Aug., 1800.

I was less surprised at seeing F. Harris, tho entirely unexpected, than concerned at the unfortunate occasion of his journey. My personal acquaintance with Mr. ——— is slight. But I was, once, at his house. Under no man's roof, have I found greater benevolence and hospitality. I shall never think my time and labor badly spent, in alleviating the misfortunes of

a good man. Mr. —— is situated in the most commodious and agreeable part of that very incommodious and disagreeable place, the Hospital. Mr. Galt the keeper, is a man of much humanity. From these circumstances we may expect that Mr. —— will pass his time, with as little inconvenience, as the nature of his disorder will permit. From the genral opinion of the phisicians and others who have seen him, we may hope, that the cause removed, the effects will be cured, and he shortly restored to his family.

Since that spell is broken, by which, the young people in your neighborhood seemed bound to celibacy, I hope that more of you will avail yourselves of your freedom; and disappoint expectations of those who anticipate the extinction of the present families, at the Green Springs. You may tell Cousin Sally, that, in my opinion, she is fully old enough to be married. Do you think there is any probability that many of your lawyers will die, or that the Court Houses will be made larger, in the course of two or three years? Because unless one or the other event takes place, you will have no room for me, in the house, and I should hate to speak to the Court and Jury, through the windows.

I wrote to Shelton that the Bishop had expressed an intention of leaving us. He has, now, resolved to continue here another course, at all events. It is possible you will see his reverence at the Springs; as he has some expectation of calling there, on his return from up the Country.

I have not commenced my law studies yet; and I believe shall not, until Oct. for I have several books, which I wish to read, before I begin, as I shall not have time to read them, afterwards. Such are Vattel, Brown on Equality, The Federalist, &c. For the sake of God, of Man and Myself, I shall endeavor to qualify myself, I will not say for "propagating and extending liberty & Equality", but, at least, for understanding it, and defending it with whatever abilities nature hath given me, or my own exertions can acquire me. But I will not say that I will "die in the Center of Old Virginia". For although it is my native land, and I now prefer it to every other spot in the Universe, and shall with my last life, retain a grateful

affection for the place, which gave me birth and cherished the marking[?] of my life, yet should even Virginia apostatise from her Republicanism, I will pursue when I cannot recall, the Goddess of Liberty, even if she fly to the pole or the line.

Ubi ut Libertas, ibi est Patria.

C. Johnson.

Tell Shelton, that Mrs. Innes and her sweet daughter, (as he calls her and as she really is), send a great deal of love to him; that he, as many others of my correspondents, is very lazy and you are to know, that I am sole occupant of the College now, and, consequently, a letter is doubly acceptable.

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FROM CHAPMAN JOHNSON

Wmsburg. 27 Oct, 1800.

To one whose affections are so seriously interested for the prosperity of Wm & Mary, as I believe, are yours, it will not be unpleasant to hear that, the commencement of the college promises a numerous collection of students. On the first natural lecture, forty students attended; a number greater than can be recollected before by even the Bishop. There have returned, here, some of your old acquaintances and I believe former fellow students. Among them are Jo. Cabell and Isaac Coles. Since you know Cabell it is needless for me to tell you, I think him clever. Seems to possess, all that strength of mind, that scientific ardor, that unremitting application, necessary to form the wise man; and all that communicative disposition, and agreeable manner, which render his knowledge useful to others, and make him respectable and respected, amiable and beloved. Remember I am describing a man with whom I have been but a little while acquainted. If I have exaggerated his virtues, it is perhaps, because my little knowledge of him, hath not enabled me to discover his vices.

The students are about to institute a Society, upon a model not frequently practiced here; but which, I think almost the

only one, that can be of material advantage to the members. It will be organized on the principles of a legislative assembly, as far as the rules will be applicable. The Bishop will be President. It is his desire that the doors shall be open to every body. This I believe will not go down with the students. A society formed thus, whose rules will resemble those of our legislature, and at whose head is a man, who will, by his presence, command the members into order, respect and awe, will, I flatter myself, be attended with every advantage possibly desirable from institutions of this kind. He who wishes to make himself conversant in the proceedings of a legislative body, or aspires at the seat of a legislator, may more familiarize himself with their rules and acquire an interesting qualification for a representative. If any be animated with the charme of true eloquence, here may he pursue her without danger of falling into the fatal but too attractive snares of false show and splendid bombast.

I have at length commenced the study of the Law. I have read Littleton's text once and am reading it again. I find some difficulties, which (if I can only solve them) serve but to heighten my pleasure, and increase my ardor. Indeed I feel so deep an interest in the Study, and swallow the *dry stuff* with so voracious an appetite that I really hope to be a lawyer, in time, if application will make me one.

C. Johnson.

[Addressed] David Watson, Atto. at Law, Louisa.  
Via Charlottesville.

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FROM CHAPMAN JOHNSON

Wmsburg 20th Feby. 1801.

My Dear Sir

Though you have, for a long time been much in arrears to me, I do not write to complain. You have no doubt had business on hand, sufficient to engage your whole thoughts. Whenever an interval of leisure shall arrive, you will perhaps

(or you may) repay by a few moments of attention, whole months of forgetfulness.

Your brother informed me, today, that he supposed you were, by this time, under the dominion of that deity, so fearful to the people of your country. I shall not offend your ears with any of the usual compliments on such occasions. If you cannot appreciate my interest in your happiness you will hardly accredit my warmest professions, or relish my sincerest congratulatings. Believing, however, that you are an admirer of the Muses, I should have attempted an Epithalamium, but for two reasons. First I thought it would arrive too late, and secondly my muse was entirely unkind.

You are, I am informed, a candidate for popular favor. I sincerely wish, that you may meet with the success you surely merit. But, unfortunately for the country, a system of electioneering intrigue has become to generally prevalent. I believe and trust, that you are not disposed to countenance it. It is, in my opinion, nothing less than direct bribery. It is the same species, tho' a different degree, of that reprobated conduct, pursued by the British Ministers in Parliamentary elections (excuse harsh terms). Conduct like this, has great influence on all our Elections. This renders it difficult for the most eminent talents to rise into notice unless they will first descend into the lowest intrigues. I know you have opponents who will not hesitate to avail themselves of every assistance, which unmanly condescension or Whiskey can afford them. But it is time that Virginians, free and independent Virginians should shake off those disgraceful remains of aristocratic venality. There is some honor in the unbought suffrage of a free people: But I am at a loss to discover the credit which can attach to an election, purchased at the expense of ones candor as a citizen and dignity as a man.

The alarming situation of the Féd. government, employs much of the attention of the people of this place. Anxiety and solicitude mark every countenance. But I suppose and hope that we are only participants of the feelings of America. This evenings mail we hope will bring us something decisive. We expected it the last; but were doubly disappointed. As the

stage drove through town, some devotee of Bacchus proclaimed through the street "Jefferson is elected". I heard the pleasing sound; joining the general exultation, I hurried to the Post office in hopes to find the news confirmed by something authentic. We were sorely disappointed. The authority of all our transports was a drunken wag, and the Northern mail had not arrived! A good deal chagrined, I was returning to College, but thinking it not criminal to share my disappointment with my neighbors, I desired Mr. Andrews' servant to inform that Jefferson was elected. Andrews was deceived. He seemed much hurt at the defeat of his party. After a little time, he disclosed a secret which he had, hitherto, very cautiously preserved. He told the company that his friend Mr. Evans had written him that the Fed's. in Congress, meant to hold out untill they were convinced that the Demos. would not yield and that then, rather than endanger the union they would elect Mr. Jefferson. When Andrews discovered the deception, he was exceedingly hurt. If you are acquainted with Mr. Andrews' political prejudices you will enjoy the joke. He is the greatest aristocrat I ever saw.

Yours earnest Friend

C. Johnson.

[Addressed] David Watson Esq.  
Atto. at Law  
Louisa  
Mail via Charlottesville.

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FROM JOSEPH C. CABELL.

Williamsburg, April 6th, 1801.

Dear Watson:—

Our friend Isaac A. Coles is now on the eve of bidding a final adieu to the College and of returning once more to the mountains of Albemarle. He will probably meet you at Carter's Trial. I have therefore an agreeable opportunity of informing you that your welcome favor of the 13th January has been now to my shame for several months in my posses-

sion. Perhaps you will doubt my sincerity in declaring that your letter was received with the warmest satisfaction. I am willing to submit to your severest reproaches for ceasing to write to you immediately on my arrival at a place where my letters would have given you most pleasure. The rapidity of the lectures, the necessity of attending constantly to some correspondents at Home probably form no sufficient excuse in your opinion. The only atonement which I shall offer is to address you as I have always done, in the style and with the feelings of an intimate friend. I shall always remember the conversation that passed between us when we were last together at Charlottesville. You then discovered my solicitude once more to revisit the College, my plans of study until the time of my return and my fixed determination to shun the gay scenes of pleasure and dissipation as long as I should remain in Williamsburg. At this late period of the course I often look back upon the time that has intervened and smile to see how differently things have happened from what I had expected. You will laugh to hear that scarcely a single Ball or Party of pleasure has escaped me. Instead also of pursuing a wide range of reading, my attention has been almost entirely confined to a few writers on the Law. My *Trunk* has been constantly stored with a variety of literature, but my *Table* has seldom contained more than Blackstone, Coke and the Virginia Laws. How impossible is it for us to say today what we will do tomorrow? how infinitely more wise it is to commit ourselves to futurity unshackled by unchangeable resolutions and under the guidance of a judgment that will be regulated by circumstances. I do not regret the manner in which I have spent my time since my arrival here. Although my own expectations have not been answered yet I have the degraded satisfaction to find that others seem to have done but little with all the assistance of genius and application. It seems to me Watson as if we are much more liable to be deceived in our own calculations after we begin the study of the Law than at any other stage whatever in education. I remember when I used to be astonished to hear that any young man was not a good lawyer after two years reading; and it is not

long since I supposed that to be skilled in the Law required no extraordinary effort of genius. But my mind has totally changed on these subjects. I begin to see that it requires much time, reflection, reading and experience to become well acquainted with the law, and that the really great lawyer must combine in himself some of the handsomest Talents of the Human mind. You may remember that a notion formerly prevailed here that a student of Law should make the study of his profession subservient to that of politics. This opinion however seems not to prevail here this course, but has yielded to one perhaps much more rational. The general opinion at this time appears to be that students of Law should devote their time partly to legal acquirements, partly to the pursuit of general Science, and but partially to the Science of government. It is really remarkable that the taste of the students here in favor of particular books and opinions varies as often as the fashions in the polite world. The Christian Religion is not as formerly a subject of general discussion, the science of metaphysics no longer engages the affections of the young men, political investigation has become less fashionable, and Godwins Political Justice is read only to two or three of the students. The College however is still famous for Republicanism. You cannot imagine with what Paroxysms of Joy we received the news of Mr. Jeffersons election. I suppose however that your Brother has given you an account of our proceedings. He was appointed to deliver an oration on the 4th of March but was unfortunately taken sick and did not recover till it was too late to make the necessary preparation. The taste for Societies has raged to a prodigious extent among us throughout the winter and the junior students in particular seem to have delighted in forming and destroying them. In the course of last fall Mr. Madison was elected President of a very general society composed of the whole number of studentss, but this institution as you may naturally expect, existed but a very short time even under his auspices. The Bishop was much pleased at being requested to take the chair of this society, took an uncommon interest in its welfare, and was prodigiously wounded when it failed of success. After the



commencement of Mr. Tucker's lectures, the whole of his class withdrew from the speaking clubs and since that time have been totally cut off from that species of improvement. The Judge shortly before his departure gave us the plan of a law society and advised us to remain in Williamsburg till July for the purpose of assisting each other in the prosecution of our studies. But the plan although a very judicious one has not been attempted on account of its requiring a greater knowledge of the mode of judicial proceedings than we possess. Besides most of the chaps are taking their leave of the College. That party spirit which too unfortunately pervades even this enlightened seminary has prevailed to a very inconsiderable degree this winter. All the respectable young men have held together and lived in perfect harmony. We have had several Balls and Parties during the winter but the old city has been remarkably dull this course, principally I [suppose on] account of the great dearth of Beauty in the female sex [torn] visits and fire-side-conversations have succeeded in a great measure to dacing and dining parties. I shall probably remain here till the middle of June about which time I shall return to my Father's. And before I conclude let me felicitate you on your matrimonial union with the sister of our amiable friend G. Minor. I look forward to the day when I am to follow your example as the happiest period of my existence. Although I have still to find the woman who will be the chosen object of my affections yet the prospect of a happy marriage brightens the morning of my life and will gild the setting hours of my existence.

Yours very since friend

Jos. C. Cabell.

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FROM CHAPMAN JOHNSON

Wmsburg 24 Jan. 1802.

My dear Watson

I should much more frequently indulge myself, in the pleasure of writing to you, did the nature of my occupations suffer

me to pursue my own inclination. Hard necessity confines my attention, almost solely, to investigations, entirely uninteresting, perhaps unimproving, and certainly loathsome, to my mind. Philosophy, history and Belle lettre, are strangers to my thoughts. Scarcely can the great political questions, which agitate our country, attract a few moments of my reflection. When I would write to my friends, my thoughts can, with difficulty, be lead from their accustomed course. I could, with ease and at length, descant on the abstractions[?] and irregularity of Coke, the perspicuity and system of Blackstone, the inaccuracies of the V. laws, and the *glorious uncertainty* of the whole science of Law. But I believe you would be as little interested with reading, as I should be with writing, such remarks. I must leave revision to the Legislature.

I trust you will not leave Richmond without giving me some further information on the subject of my last letter to you.<sup>17</sup> We are told, that a serious alarm has been lately experienced in Notaway. In Williamsburg we have had a slight (though I believe an unfounded) apprehension of disturbance. Is it not miserable, is it not shameful, is it not unworthy the character of Virginians, or of men, thus to live the unsafe trembling tyrants of an unhappy people? The subject almost deprives me of moderation.

I observe that Munford's Chancery bill has been lost. The very little acquaintance I have with the organization of our Chancery system, is sufficient to inform me, that *some* change is necessary. On the propriety of any particular alteration, I am, by no means, qualified to judge. I confess I have never been able to discover the great excellence of a system, which will deny to a man in one court, that justice, which he may rightfully demand, in another; nor, when I have divested myself of the character and the feelings of a *Lawyer*, have I ever revered that misterious veil which high wrought legal technicality has thrown over the plainest principles of Justice.

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<sup>17</sup> If our colleague, the late Beverley B. Munford, had known of this strong expression in regard to slavery made by a talented young man, afterwards famous in the state as a lawyer, he would certainly have included it in his "*Virginia's Attitude towards Slavery and Secession*".

I have not paid sufficient attention to Munford's bill, clearly to comprehend its object; nor do I know enough of the practice of our courts to estimate its effect on our Jurisprudence. But I had apprehended that the Bill did not go to the entire consolidation of Law and Equity. I had believed that, preserving the distinction between Law and Equity, equitable relief had best been placed in different hands and rendered accessible by different avenues. The Constitution, perhaps, requires the distinction. I have heard learned gentlemen express great apprehensions of confusion, from the progress of this bill. I have heard it called 'A Bill for the abolition of legal certainty'. On the justice of this remark, I am incompetent to determine. I am happy that an emendatory bill of some kind has passed your house. But is there not danger from the refractory Senate? I hear that they are desiring to amend. Will they hazard the bill?

I am in an ill humor with the Senate [page torn] . . . their negative on the Convention bill. After Brokenborough's amendment, what rational objection could be urged against it? Wherefore this vain fear of Conventions? Have not Conventions<sup>11</sup> formed the Constitutions of America from New Hampshire to Georgia? There are but two exceptions. The example of Pensylvania is held up *in terrorem*, to frighten us from Convention. The history of that state affords the strongest proof of the little danger, with which a republican people may approach the sanctuary of government. Pensylvania made an experiment of a constitution which did not succeed. But when its defects were discovered, how easily were they remedied? But is [so?] clamorous Virginians are not less republican than other people. Whilst the flame of republicanism burns [word illegible] amongst us, there is no danger, but the elected convention will be guided by the light. But we are particularly happy; Wherefore reform? The Constitution, the basis of our political happiness is undoubtedly defective; and however specious present appearances our security is certainly precarious. The proudest edifice, if its foundation be decayed,

<sup>11</sup> In spite of not infrequent agitation, no constitutional convention met in Virginia until 1829-30.

may command the applause and admiration of the distant observer, but can only impress, with regret and alarm, the more accurate observer of its defects. I am so forcibly [impressed?], with the propriety of calling a convention that I have thought the House of Delegates would do well to recommend it to the consideration of the people.

C. Johnson.

[Address] David Watson,  
Richmond.

Mail

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FROM FRANCIS W. GILMER<sup>12</sup>

Richmond, Octr. 23d. 1818.

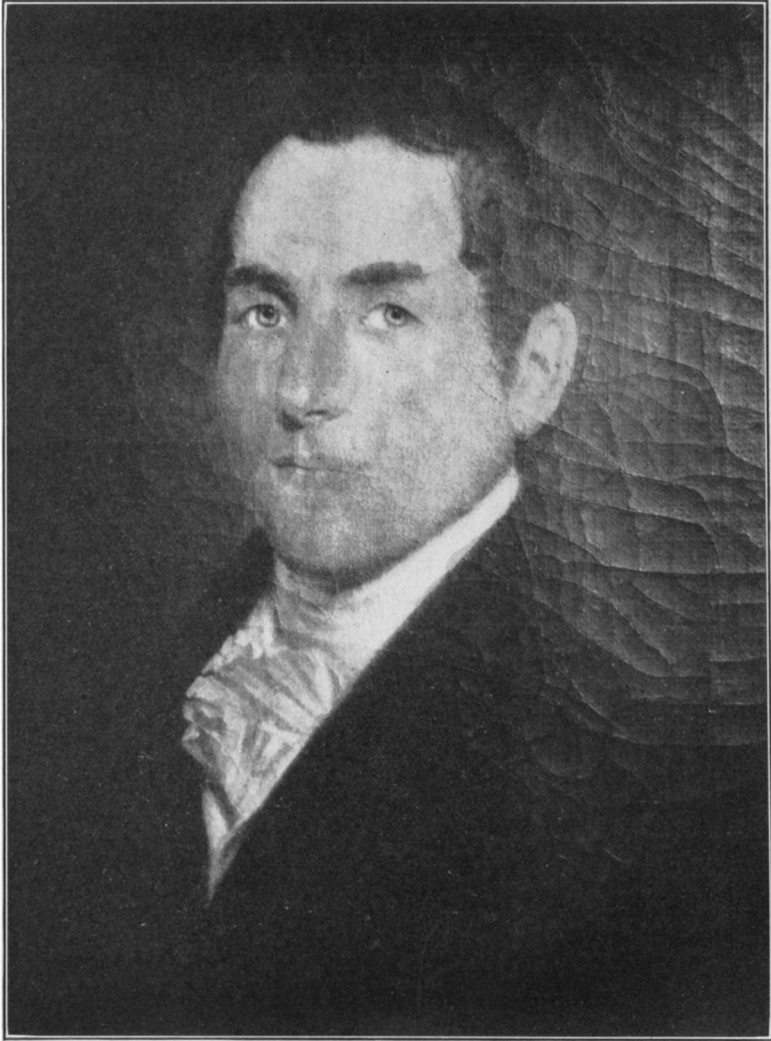
Dear Majr.

Tho' you and I have been little together, and were not of an age to be very familiar even if we had, I was raised with a sort of hereditary esteem for one who was an early favorite of my parents, & family. I therefore claim all the privileges which that friendship, increased by our *military campaign*<sup>13</sup> can give to call your attention to a review of the Old Bachelor

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<sup>12</sup> Francis Walker Gilmer was son of Dr. George Gilmer, of "Pen Park," Albemarle County, and his wife Lucy, daughter of Dr. Thomas Walker, of "Castle Hill," in the same county. He studied, first at Georgetown College, Washington, and afterwards at William and Mary, William Wirt, who was a fellow student, and was later his brother-in-law, said that "in learning he is a prodigy. He had been removed from school to school in different parts of the country—had met at all those places with different collections of old books, of which he was always fond, and seemed also to have command of his father's medical library, which he read in the original Latin. It was curious to hear a boy of seventeen years of age speaking with fluency, and even with manly eloquence, and quoting such names as Boehaave, Van Helmont, Van Sweiten, together with Descartes, Gassendi, Newton, and Locke, and discanting on the System of Linnaeus with the familiarity of a veteran professor" (Bruce's *University of Virginia*, I, 345). His brilliant talents and extraordinary literary and scientific culture, raised high expectations in regard to him; but frail health and a distaste for public life prevented them from being fulfilled. In 1824 he went abroad to secure professors for the University. An admirable account is given by Dr. Bruce (*University of Virginia*, 344 et seq.) of Gilmer's life and his mission. He died in 1826.

<sup>13</sup> David Watson was an officer in Virginia forces in the War of 1812, and F. W. Gilmer must have served with him.



FRANCIS WALKER GILMER

From photograph of portrait  
at the University of Virginia.

in the *Analectic Magazine* for August. The review is by Walsh<sup>14</sup> unquestionably the first critic of our country. He has given a large share of personal praise to Mr. Wirt which cannot fail to be gratifying to his friends. He says "we cannot forbear singling out again the 33d. No. which we are inclined to view, on the whole as the master piece of the *Old Bachelor*. The dramatic energy, & deep pathos of the composition, attest powers which would insure a brilliant career to him as votary of the tragic muse." Now who wrote the 33d. No. you and I can at least guess. I concur with my friend Walsh in thinking it augurs a dramatic cast of genius which even in this mid-summer—for I will not call it autumn of life should be cultivated. Suppose you loosen the reins of your imagination & produce us a play for the theatre which will soon be opened here. I am ambitious that the *Old Dominion* should make the first offering to the muse of tragedy—as it has already done to eloquence. Your pen should not be idle—write something—If I can provoke you to do so I shall claim to have done good service to the literature of our country.

Accept this testimony of my esteem in the spirit in which it is offered—and believe me ever

Yours sincere friend

F. W. Gilmer.

[Addressed] Majr. David Watson, Louisa Ct. House, Va.

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<sup>14</sup> No. 33 of "*The Old Bachelor*", stated here to have been written by David Watson, treats of the evils of gambling. After the fashion of the old essayists the papers in this work were headed by quotations deemed suitable to the subject. David Watson selected the following:

"Medo reges atque tretrachus  
Omnia magna loquens; modo sit menses, tripes est  
Concha sali pari, et toga quae defendere frigus  
Onamvis crass queat".

Hor. Sat. v. 12."

FROM FRANCIS W. GILMER

Edinburgh, 26th. July 1824.

My dear Major,

I think you must be nearly as much astonished to receive a letter from me dated "Edinburgh" as you would from the other world. Indeed I little imagined, when I was condoling with you over your rheumatism last summer, that I now should be here: and being here, I hardly know by what impulse or association it is, that I determine to write to you—so it is, I have, and you make take my letter for better or worse.

It is now about six weeks since I first set foot on British soil, and tho' I have received every where, the most flattering attentions, and shall return liking these trans-Atlantic cousins of ours, much better than I did before I saw them, I am already home-sick. If a Scotchman loves his flinty hills, veiled in eternal mist, well may I, the sunny fields, the red hills, the brown shade, the blue sky of Albemarle. Believe me, there is nothing in England or Scotland, for natural beauty, for genial climate, Etc., comparable to Albemarle or the Greensprings. Grass grows here with luxuriance & richness, which always gives a fine appearance to the fields; but their crops of all kinds, seem to be produced almost entirely by the manure annually spread on the surface; and withal, they are scarcely more abundant than with us, in a fine season. Here they never suffer for rain, the clouds are an inexhaustible source of fertility to their fields, they do (and much better) for the British, what is done in other countries, at incredible expense, by irrigation. But I have always heard England spoken of as a continual bed of natural fertility. No such thing, I assure you, "except in the book". I saw in Suffolk, a greater extent of hopeless sterility, than I ever did, even in the barrens of Fluvanna. For near twenty miles, it is a perfect *caput mortuum*, naked and bare, and penetrated by rabbits into a honey comb—not a bush, or tree, to be seen. Even Norfolk, so famous for its agriculture, is at last a bed of sand, on which they put manure as thick as we do in our garden

beds—here they produce turnips, rear sheep, wool & mutton sell for an incredible price, they make money, & boast of their soil. I assure you Mr. Coke<sup>15</sup> has no soil equal to Brackets; and if you could send your wool and mutton to London, you would beat Holkham. Let us go on, “increase and multiply,” and we shall still be “the great nation.”

While we value the soil of G. B. too highly, we under-rate their people. The English are exceedingly neat, frugal, industrious and obliging; exactly our old Virginia boys over again. You see hundreds of rosy cheek'd well dressed, country girls, turning hay; a circumstance I confess, which rather shocked my gallantry at first, having been accustomed to see only slaves at such occupations. The Scotch are more forbidding in their appearance, the women are brown, ill shaped, bare footed etc. and Edinburgh still retains very respectable traces of the original quality, which gave rise to the story of “ah sweet Edinburgh” etc. That apart, it is magnificently built. The houses are large, the stone the most beautiful I ever saw, the scenery round about wild & striking—Arthur's seat—the crags, the sea, the castle, Hollyrood etc. are all picturesque & romantic. Neither the Scotch nor the English appear to me, to have as much natural shrewdness, and penetration as our own country people, nor have the Scotch any great learning to boast of. The English by their vast libraries, and devoting their long lives unremittingly to one line of study accumulate prodigious erudition. I was several days with old Dr. Parr, the greatest scholar living—and ceased to wonder at his learning, when I recollected, that for near 70 years he has been poring over Aristotle, Homer, Cicero, Virgil, etc. etc. If I can succeed in this mission, I shall to claim to have done the best service which any son of Virginia (next to Gen. Washington) has ever conferred on his country: I have great hopes I shall succeed: in laying the foundation for a real library (of which there is none in America) I certainly

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas William Coke (1754-1842) created Earl of Leicester 1837, but better known as “Coke of Holkham” from his celebrated estate in Norfolk. He was a famous agriculturist and introduced many improvements in cultivation and stock-raising. “Bracketts” was Major Watson's home in Louisa County.



will: and that is the first step towards making scholars: had I lived in a great library, I should have known something, even without instruction. The professor of oriental languages at Cambridge was a carpenter,—his house and tools were burnt, and then it was discovered, he had without instruction, become one of the most learned orientalists in the world. But unless the few men of education who remain in Virginia, unite all their breath into one of these patent blow-pipes, & throw a heavy stream on the spark, it will expire. I call upon you therefore, from the haunt of the Scottish muse, to do your utmost towards the “revival of letters” in Virginia.

Meanwhile God protect you from rheumatism & all other maladies,

Yours most truly

F. W. Gilmer.

D. Watson, Esqr.

What of our young ward—it was he I believe who put me to writing this letter—can we do ought for him?—let us rear him up as a man of letters for the university!!

[Addressed] David Watson esqr., Louisa Court House—  
Virginia (U. States)